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THERE was an ancient ſect of philoſophers, the diſciples of Pythagoras, who held, that the ſouls of men, and all other animals exiſted in a ſtate of perpetual tranſmigration; and that when by death they were diſlodged from one corporeal habitation, they were immediately reinſtated in another, happier or more miſerable, according to their behaviour in the former: ſo that when any perſon made his exit from the ſtage of this world, he was ſuppoſed only to retire behind the ſcenes to be new dreſſed, and to have had a new part aſſigned him, more or leſs agreeable, in proportion to the merit of his performance in the laſt.

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THIS doctrine of tranſmigration, I muſt own, was always a very favourite tenet of mine, and always appeared to me one of the moſt rational gueſſes of the human mind into a future ſtate. I ſhall here therefore endeavour to ſhew the great probability of it's truth from the following conſiderations. Firſt from it's juſtice, ſecondly from it's utility, and laſtly from the difficulties we lie under to account for the ſufferings of many innocent creatures without it.

FIRST then, the juſtice of this ſyſtem exceeds that of all others; becauſe, by it the great law of retaliation may be more ſtrictly adhered to: for by means of this metamorphoſis, men may ſuffer in one life the very ſame injuries which they have inflicted in another; and that too in the very ſame perſons, by a change only of ſituation. Thus, for inſtance, the cruel tyrant who in one life has ſported with the miſeries of his ſlaves, may in the next feel all the miſeries of ſlavery under a maſter as unmerciful as himſelf. The relentleſs and unjuſt judge may be impriſoned, condemned and hanged in his turn. Divines may be compelled by fire and faggot to believe the creeds and articles they have compoſed for the edification of others; and ſoldiers may be plundered and raviſhed, in the perſons of defenceleſs peaſants, and innocent virgins. The lawyer reviving in the character of a client, may be tormented with delay, expence, uncertainty and diſappointment; and the phyſician, who in one life has taken exorbitant fees, may be obliged to take phyſic in another. All thoſe who under the honourable denomination of ſportſmen have entertained themſelves with the miſeries and deſtruction of innocent animals, may be terrified and murthered in the ſhapes of hares, partridges and woodcocks; and all

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thoſe who under the more illuſtrious title of heroes have delighted in the devaſtation of their own ſpecies, may be maſſacred by each other in the forms of invincible game cocks, and pertinacious bull-dogs. As for ſtateſmen, miniſters, and all great men devoted to great buſineſs, they, however guilty, cannot be more properly, nor more ſeverely puniſhed, than by being obliged to reaſſume their former characters, and to live the very ſame lives over again.

In the next place, the utility of this ſyſtem is equal to it's juſtice, and happily coincides with it: for by means of this tranſmigration, all the neceſſary inconveniences, and all the burthenſome offices of life being impoſed on thoſe only, who by their miſbehaviour in a former ſtate have deſerved them, become at once juſt puniſhments to Them, and at the ſame time benefits to ſociety; and ſo all thoſe, who have injured the public in one life by their vices, are obliged in another to make reparation by their ſufferings. Thus the tyrant, who by his power has oppreſſed his country in the ſituation of a prince, in that of a ſlave may be compelled to do it ſome ſervice by his labour. The highwayman who has ſtoped and plundered travellers, may expedite and aſſiſt them in the ſhape of a poſt-horſe. The metaphorical buck, who has terrified ſober citizens by his exploits, converted into a real one, may make them ſome compenſation by his haunches; and mighty conquerors, who have laid waſte the world by their ſwords, may be obliged, by a ſmall alteration in ſex and ſituation, to contribute to it's repeopling, by the qualms of breeding, and the pains of child-birth.

For my own part, I verily believe this to be the caſe. I make no doubt but that Louis the fourteenth is now chained

chained to an oar in the galleys of France, and that Hernando Cortez is digging gold in the mines of Peru or Mexico. That Turpin the highwayman, is ſeveral times a day ſpurred backwards and forwards between London and Epping; and that lord *** and ſir Harry **** are now actually roaſting for a city feaſt. I queſtion not but that Alexander the great, and Julius Cæſar have died many times in child-bed ſince their appearance in thoſe illuſtrious and depopulating characters; that Charles the twelfth is at this inſtant a curates wife in ſome remote village, with a numerous and increaſing family; and that Kouli Khan is now whipped from pariſh to pariſh, in the perſon of a big-bellied beggar-woman, with two children in her arms, and three at her back.

LASTLY the probability of this ſyſtem appears from the difficulty of accounting for the ſufferings of many innocent creatures without it: for if we look round us, we cannot but obſerve a great and wretched variety of this kind; numberleſs animals ſubjected, by their own natures, to many miſeries, and by our cruelties to many more; incapable of crimes, and conſequently incapable of deſerving them; called into being, as far as we can diſcover, only to be miſerable for the ſervice or diverſion of others leſs meritorious than themſelves; without any poſſibility of preventing, deſerving, or receiving recompence for their unhappy lot, if their whole exiſtence is comprehended in the narrow and wretched circle of their preſent life. But the theory here inculcated, removes all theſe difficulties, and reconciles theſe ſeemingly unjuſt diſpenſations with the ſtricteſt juſtice: it informs us, that theſe their ſufferings may be by no means undeſerved, but the juſt puniſhments of their former miſbehaviour

miſbehaviour in a ſtate, where, by means of their very vices, they may have eſcaped them. It teaches us that the purſued and perſecuted fox was once probably ſome crafty and rapacious miniſter, who had purchaſed by his ill-acquired wealth that ſafety, which he cannot now procure by his flight: that the bull, baited with all the cruelties that human ingenuity, or human malevolence can invent, was once ſome relentleſs tyrant, who had inflicted all the tortures which he now endures: that the poor bird, blinded, impriſoned, and at laſt ſtarved to death in a cage, may have been ſome unforgiving creditor; and the widowed turtle, pining away life for the loſs of her mate, ſome faſhionable wife, rejoicing at the death of her huſband, which her own ill-uſage had occaſioned.

NEVER can the delicious repaſt of roaſted lobſters excite my appetite, whilſt the ideas of the tortures in which thoſe innocent creatures have expired, preſent themſelves to my imagination. But when I conſider that they muſt have once probably been Spaniards at Mexico, or Dutchmen at Amboyna, I fall to, both with a good ſtomach and a good conſcience, and pleaſe myſelf with the thoughts, that I am thus offering up a ſacrifice acceptable to the manes of many millions of maſſacred Indians. Never can I repoſe myſelf with ſatisfaction in a poſt-chaiſe, whilſt I look upon the ſtarved, foundered, ulcerated, and excoriated animals, who draw it, as mere horſes, condemned to ſuch exquiſite and unmerited torments for my convenience; but when I reflect, that they once muſt undoubtedly have exiſted in the characters of turnkeys of Newgate, or fathers of the holy inquiſition, I gallop on with as much eaſe, as expedition; and am perfectly ſatisfied, that in purſuing my journey, I am but the executioner of the ſtricteſt juſtice.